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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, France, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Latvia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Sri Lanka and Venezuela: draft resolution

National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights

The General Assembly,

Recalling the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights concerning national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights,

Welcoming the rapidly growing interest shown in all regions in the creation and strengthening of independent, pluralistic national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights,

Convinced of the important role such national institutions play in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in developing and enhancing public awareness of those rights and freedoms,

Recognizing that the United Nations has played and should continue to play an important role in assisting the development of national institutions,

Recalling that, in its resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993, the Assembly welcomed the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, annexed to that resolution,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action[1] adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, which reaffirmed the important and constructive role played by national human rights institutions, in particular in their advisory capacity to the competent authorities and their role in remedying human rights violations, in disseminating information on human rights and in education in human rights,

Recalling also the Platform for Action[2] adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, in which Governments were urged to create or strengthen independent national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the human rights of women,

Noting the diverse approaches adopted throughout the world for the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level, emphasizing the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, and emphasizing and recognizing the value of such approaches to promoting universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Noting with satisfaction the constructive participation of representatives of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights in, and their positive contribution to, the deliberations of the World Conference on Human Rights, the Commission on Human Rights, as well as international seminars and workshops on human rights organized or sponsored by the United Nations,

Welcoming the strengthening of regional cooperation among national human rights institutions and, in particular, the First African Conference on National Human Rights Institutions, held at Yaoundé, in February 1996, the Second International Workshop on Ombudsman and Human Rights Institutions, held at Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, in May 1996, the first meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, held at Darwin, Australia, in July 1996, the Third International Workshop on Ombudsman and National Human Rights Institutions, held at Riga in June 1997, and the second meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, held in New Delhi in September 1997, as well as the holding of the Fourth International Workshop on Ombudsman and National Human Rights Institutions, at Mérida, Mexico, in November 1997,

1. Welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights;[3]

2. Reaffirms the importance of the development of effective, independent and pluralistic national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, in keeping with the principles relating to the status of national

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[1] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[2] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] A/52/468.

institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 48/134;

3. Recognizes that, in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, it is the right of each State to choose the framework for the national institution that is best suited to its particular needs at the national level in order to promote international human rights standards;

4. Encourages Member States to establish or, where they already exist, to strengthen national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, as outlined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action;

5. Welcomes the growing number of States establishing, or considering the establishment of, national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, and the intensified activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in promoting and strengthening national institutions;

6. Encourages national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights established by Member States to prevent and combat all violations of human rights as enumerated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and relevant international instruments;

7. Reaffirms the role of national institutions, where they exist, as appropriate agencies, inter alia, for the dissemination of human rights materials and other public information activities, including those of the United Nations, and encourages national institutions to play an active role in the celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the national and local levels;

8. Urges the Secretary-General to continue to give high priority to requests from Member States for assistance in the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions as part of the programme of advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights;

9. Welcomes the high priority given by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to work on national institutions, encourages the High Commissioner to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made and budgetary resources provided to continue and further extend activities in support of national human rights institutions, and invites Governments to contribute additional, earmarked funds to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights for that purpose;

10. Notes the role of the Coordinating Committee created by national institutions, as recognized in Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/54 of 4 March 1994,[4] in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to assist Governments and national institutions,

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[4] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 4 (E/1994/24), chap. II, sect. A.

when requested, to follow up on relevant resolutions and recommendations concerning the strengthening of national institutions;

11. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide the necessary assistance for holding meetings of the Coordinating Committee during the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

12. Also requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide, from within existing resources and from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the field of human rights, the necessary assistance for regional meetings of national institutions;

13. Notes the importance of resolving the question of finding an appropriate form of participation by independent national institutions in meetings of the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies;

14. Recognizes the important and constructive role that non-governmental organizations may play, in cooperation with national institutions, for the better promotion and protection of human rights;

15. Encourages all Member States to take appropriate steps to promote the exchange of information and experience concerning the establishment and effective operation of such national institutions;

16. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution.